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FRONTIER LAW.

It may easily be conceived that in newly settled, scantily peopled districts, the administration of law and justice is not invested with the forms and solemnity we are accustomed to see attend it at home. The western frontier of the United States, to say the least, forms no exception to this rule. It is perfectly amazing, to one who has been used to large instalments of the commodities, to see with how little law and physic we in New Mexico, for instance, can get along. Our only doctor has now been absent a month on private business, and no substitute for him could be found within sixty-five miles in one direction, fifty in another, and thirty-five in another; yet no one has died, that I am aware of, through his absence, although we have had a few fevers, and some gun-shot wounds—the latter being the prevalent epidemic in these parts; and perhaps analogous results may follow from the total absence of lawyers. There is, however, this important difference in the cases: the climate of New Mexico is boasted to be—with, I believe, excellent reason—the healthiest in the world, but I cannot conscientiously say that I believe its people to be the least quarrelsome and pugnacious, which they should be to make the cases parallel.

I had not been in the settlement many days when I had an opportunity of seeing how legal processes were served here. The officer invited the debtor, for the man owed certain fees, to come and pay; the latter declined, seasoning his refusal with the strong sauce much in favour in New Mexico; whereupon the administrator of the law knocked him down with a revolver, and kicked him on the head until it was a mass of blood and bruises.

Not always, however, are the functions of justice administered so sternly; in fact, when the culprit is submissive, and meekly submits himself for a crime for which he cannot decently be hanged, he is rather embarrassing than otherwise to the authorities; for we have no jail here, our only place of detention being a large cupboard on a landing-place of the stairs of our hotel, and we can't keep a

man there for weeks, until an opportunity arrives of sending him to the chief town. A common climax to this committal for trial detention is, that the culprit goes away when he thinks it about time, sauntering about the town meanwhile, and regularly rendering himself into custody at meal-times and bed-time. We have not much Lynch-law here at present, but my antiquated prejudices were shocked by one of our principal representatives of legal justice dropping in to spend half-an-hour with me, so as to be out of the way while the 'boys' deliberated about taking out a horse-thief—who was at that time undergoing the detention just described—and hanging him. My friend was all for his being hanged; horse-stealing in these parts is the seven deadly sins in one; but, as he said, it would not do for him to be seen in the matter. This man's case was a little remarkable, inasmuch as he had got clear off, as he thought, with his spoil, when he was pursued and overtaken by two armed Indians, whom the owner had hired for the purpose; and this is the only instance I am acquainted with where Indians have been employed for such a purpose. No doubt, the man was bad enough, but I thought there were worse about than he, and what kept rising to my mind was the recollection that I had advanced him some money, a few days back, to buy a pair of boots for his only child, a pretty little girl about six years old, of whom he was very fond. Somehow or other this fact haunted me more than might be expected, and broke my night's sleep a little; and I was right glad in the morning to find he had not been hanged. He escaped in manner aforesaid, after living at the hotel for some weeks, in better style, I suppose, than he had ever done in his life.

Had this man been put to death, I have no doubt that he would have met his fate with perfect *sang-froid*; they all do so, out here. In the only attempt, so far as I know, that we have had to establish Lynch-law, an armed party met on the mountains a man whom they suspected of diverse malpractices. Now, the Lynchers—Regulators they used to be called; they are Vigilantes now—always proceed with a certain order and show of justice, which

makes their proceedings seem less lawless and irregular; but these were not a duly constituted party, and so they did not go to work in proper form. They determined to hang the man then and there; made him ride back with them to a spot fitted for their purpose, and told him his doom. He saw at once that resistance was in vain, so he calmly submitted to have the rope put round his neck. While they were throwing the end over the limb of a tree, they asked him if he had any message; he only said that he should have liked to see his wife and children again, but as that was impossible, he was quite ready 'to take the trip.' But in his case, too, they did not hang the man; a minority strongly opposed it; and so warning him to leave the country, they released him. For this vacillation and lenity they were blamed more than for their seizing the man; even the partisans of the latter declared that it was a thing unheard of in this western country to let a man go after you had once put a rope round his neck. It was not only a dangerous precedent in itself, but it must be remembered that out here it would be utterly impossible to convict any man who had killed another, if he could prove that this latter had ever threatened him. If a man ever says he will shoot another, he had assuredly better do it, or leave the country, for the threatened man will kill him, and may do so with complete impunity; no jury would ever convict, and I doubt if any judge could be found who would sentence such a person.

In the case cited just now, the man did not leave the country, or, at anyrate, not for some time, and, to my intense astonishment, for I did not know him at all, I was suddenly informed that I, with another, was chosen to decide how much ought to be given him for the offence, or outrage on him. There were circumstances which need not be alluded to now which made it particularly awkward for me to accept such an office; but from some hearsay reason or another, the man had confidence in me, and I was obliged, for the sake of peace, to decide the matter. We awarded him much less than I should think sufficient for such an adventure; the curious in such matters may perhaps like to know how much in these parts is considered fair compensation. To an English reader, who would consider himself entitled to a handsome competence for life, if he got a black eye in a railway accident, I am afraid that the sum of three hundred dollars, worth at that time about fifty-three pounds in gold, will seem almost insignificant. The man knew it was my policy to give him as little as I decently could, yet he was quite satisfied, and we parted excellent friends. Only a few days back he came to see me, and to invite me to his new farm, where I could have splendid shooting, as his land abounded in antelope and game of every kind.

Our justice of the peace here—we have only one—is a miller. He is of Dutch-American extraction, but a capital John Bull after all. He has not, and does not claim to have, the slightest pretension

to legal acquirements, in a technical sense; but his shrewd common-sense, penetration, and integrity, make his decisions, I will guarantee, as correct as those of the most finished lawyer in the world. His court is at the mill, held in his little office about nine feet by six—I don't think it is larger; and to see the proceedings there for the first time is a very curious sight, as being quite a reversal of all our previous experience. It is impossible to tell at the first glance who is the prisoner, as he is not fettered, and is probably crowded up amidst the indifferent spectators, looking as little concerned as any one else, and chewing the indispensable tobacco-plug; while the justice, in his old, loose, white, floury coat, his broad-brimmed hat, worn very much, on his poll, and with his broad, good-tempered, yet very shrewd face, lolls against his little desk, and chews his pellet of tobacco also, with an air as little like a London magistrate as need be.

I was summoned to attend one trial, or examination, in the case of a man who was charged with killing a Mexican on the third of September last, by stabbing him in the mouth. I was supposed to have seen the earlier part of the affray, and hence was required. When I got to the little room in the mill, it was pretty well crowded; but as the justice and all were evidently waiting for some one, I presumed that the prisoner had not yet been brought in; so I sat down on the only seat I could find, on a rude apology for a bedstead which filled one end of the little room, apologising as I did so for disturbing a man who was sitting at the corner of it. Well, after waiting a bit, and after two or three more had come in, the trial began, and, to my great surprise, the man whom I had disturbed, and against whom I was leaning, was the murderer! His name was Smith—it really was—and they all spoke of him as 'Mr Smith,' or 'this gentleman.' 'Do you know this gentleman?' said the justice, addressing a witness, and nodding his head in the direction of the accused—'do you know this gentleman here, Mr Smith, that is charged with having killed this man?' This was the strain all through, nor did it cease here, for the local newspaper reported the case thus—I give the report in full, and, but for the suppression of two or three names of persons and places, which would too completely identify the scene and actors, I give it verbatim:

'Sent to Jail'—Mr Edward Smith, who killed a Mexican some time since, and who has been confined to his bed ever since from the wounds received at the time—and who had been confined in the hospital of Fort Union—was brought to . . . last Tuesday, and had a hearing before Squire . . . After hearing the evidence, the court bound the prisoner over to the next term of the district court in the sum of four thousand dollars, in default of which he was sent to jail.'

Now, it must not be supposed that this homicide was a person of such standing here, that, from mere habit, the writers and speakers described him as 'Mr Smith'—not at all; he was a labouring man,

and the associate of two highwaymen who had been killed and brought in a very little time before. I was assured, however, that all through the territory there was great laxity and familiarity in dealing with criminals, and one case was given—this was on undeniable authority—where a horse-thief, the very worst of offenders here, was being tried, when news was brought in that a pony-race was about to be decided near the court-house. Every soul in the court—justice, prisoner, officers, witnesses, and all—at once hurried out, and all stopped to see the result of the race, after which they returned to the court, and business was resumed. Lest the reader should suppose that I am only telling of incidents which occur at a cluster of log-huts dignified by the name of a town, let him be advised that this last occurrence took place at Santa Fé—the City of the Holy Faith—the capital of the territory.

To return, however, to my Mr Smith : he was sent to jail, as has been said, which jail was in our county town. Here was a man committed for wilful murder—his being committed in default of bail was of course a little legal fiction, bail being fixed so high in such cases that it is impossible for the culprit to obtain it—and one would suppose that he, at anyrate, would be kept in the strictest custody. But there was no jailer at all amongst us; and after a time, the man had the run of the town, and used to go and have his ‘toddy,’ and smoke his cigar, like any other gentleman. Afterwards, he undertook to mind a bar for a saloon-keeper, which duty he for a considerable time fulfilled, and when business was over, he used to go in and lock himself up at night. Once or twice, being of an impulsive and excitable disposition, he got into ‘difficulties,’ and armed himself with a revolver, being only quelled at considerable risk. When he thought he had staid there long enough, and that the assizes had drawn near enough, he went off; and at the moment of these words being written, it is asserted that he has taken up the profitable business of highway robber, or ‘road-agent,’ and has laid several plans for increasing his store, not wholly without interest for the present writer.

In all thinly populated districts of America, the want of proper jails, and the bad management of such as do exist, are a crying and fearful evil. At this instant, there are at large twenty-nine of the most dangerous convicts that the skirts of society could furnish who have recently burst their jail in Nevada. These men were attended on Sundays by *one* jailer only, and he used to ask them to be good enough to go to their respective cells, when what was facetiously called locking-up time came. Naturally enough, it was on a Sunday they made their successful attempt to escape ; they knocked down their custodian with a stung-shot—a very favourite weapon in these parts—and then the gang, all murderers or rowdies of the worst description, burst into the governor's house, where the latter was at tea with his wife and family ; him they stabbed and knocked down, and would have killed, but for the desperate resistance of the man-servant who was present. This man, it is very characteristic to tell, was himself a convict, a ‘lifer,’ as our English roughs would say, and ‘in’ for murder. But he fought like a demon, and with a heavy chair, his only weapon, knocked down three of the assailants. They were probably unwilling to kill him, whereby the governor's own life was spared. The gang sacked the armoury, and

sallied forth, armed with repeating rifles and revolvers, and with a most ample supply of ammunition. They were often heard of, as it was totally impossible for such a party to conceal themselves, and the sheriff of one county crossed by them, hearing of their depredations on their route, determined to intercept them. He succeeded but too well, for his party were beaten off by the desperate convicts with the loss of several lives, the fugitives escaping unharmed.

In addition to such examples as the last, I may quote what was told me by the chief executive officer of one of the frontier states. He said that when escapes took place, he did not think they were usually the result of violence—indeed, such departures *en masse* as the Nevada one just cited must, of necessity, be rare—he thought they were generally the result of the captive ‘interviewing’ his jailer.

It will be judged from the foregoing paragraphs, that prompter measures, less dilatory justice, is naturally in favour among people who see such results from the ordinary course of ‘law.’ So, at the very town where Mr Smith abode as long as it suited him, the climax of Mr William Wallace Sanderson’s career met with general approval.

This hero was a desperado of the first water, having killed nine ‘white’ men with the same pistol, which weapon he always had about him sleeping or waking, and which bore nine notches on its stock as record. Indians and Mexicans he took no account of ; he did not know how many he had killed of them. Most of his antagonists he had slain by shots in the eyes ; one man, indeed, still walks about here with but one eye, the other and a corner of the orbital bone having been blown out by Wal. ; another, who thought he had, as they say here, the ‘dead drop’ on him, and was about to fire, had his right thumb shot off by the surprising quickness of our hero’s aim. William Wallace had a real or imaginary grievance against a saloon-keeper called Simpson in this town, and it was pretty generally known that he intended to pick a quarrel with and shoot this tenth white man ; so Mr Simpson was on his guard a good deal when Wal. was about, and one night it was evident the latter meant mischief. He came in either intoxicated or feigning to be so, and it would be difficult to say in which condition he was most to be dreaded. After addressing a few moderately strong remarks to those present, he flung himself on a card-table, right over the cards, to the utter confusion of the game. This would have brought on a crisis at once, but that some friends forced him away ; it was plain, however, that the *dénouement* was only suspended, for he renewed that night his threats of killing the saloon-keeper. Whatever he might have been over-night, he certainly was not sober in the morning ; and Simpson was warned that he would probably come in, as before, to pick a quarrel ; and sure enough, he did ; and after a number of annoying remarks to Simpson, who was standing inside his bar, Wal., of course, being on the other side, the latter suddenly and fiercely demanded if he had anything to say against the Sanderson family. Simpson replied that he had not, whereupon Wal. clapped his hand on the revolver which hung at his hip, and told Simpson he meant to settle with him. Alas for Wal ! He clapped his hand, as said, upon his revolver ; but Simpson had his ready cocked in his hand, and

when this threat was uttered, instantly fired, and shot Wal. right into the brain through the forehead. When you fire at a man out here, the rule is, as laid down by the best authorities, 'Pull, while you have a cartridge ;' and as Wal. did not fall at once, Mr Simpson shewed he understood the regulation by firing three more bullets straight into his head. Then, and not till then, did my hero fall, and as he struck the ground, his antagonist came round and fired another pellet into his chest, to prevent the possibility of any mistake. The saloon-keeper had a hearing before the magistrate—in fact, he gave himself up at once ; but the circumstances of the case were so notorious, that substantial justice was done by his immediate acquittal.

It is always considered a good sign when a man comes in and gives himself up. I need hardly say that in such a country as this—where, for a hundred leagues from north to south, and for a hundred leagues from east to west, you would not find as many constables as patrol a leading thoroughfare in London—escape would be the easiest thing possible, in the majority of cases. But to set against this is the fact, that most men are getting their living in some mode which they would have to give up if they left their 'location.' About the time I have just been referring to, two other persons gave themselves up to the authorities, and were each set free. One killed his partner in a struggle for a revolver, which the deceased drew. No one being present but themselves during the dispute, no evidence but that of the survivor was obtainable ; and as his account seemed a very consistent and probable one, he was, as said, acquitted.

I was very sorry for the fate of the man who was killed in this case, for he was one of the most quiet, decent men that we did business with. It may give some idea of the life out west if I say that he lived at a village where there were scarcely any but Mexican families ; and that he consequently used to regard our little settlement, with its stores, company's house, and a few adobe buildings, as a sort of metropolis for society, and a very paradise for peace and order ! That we did very little business here on a Sunday, impressed him especially : that he, who worked very hard, and acted as his own teamster, should have paid thirty dollars a month, for three years, to keep his only child, a girl of eleven, at school away from home, in order that she should have some idea of civilised society, impressed me as much.

The other man alluded to was a mere boy of seventeen, whose master, being drunk, had suddenly, for some trivial fault, determined to kill him, and drew his revolver for the purpose. The boy, seeing he was in earnest, begged for mercy, and hid himself as well as he could behind a horse. The man fired three times at such parts of him as he could see, two bullets striking the horse ; and the boy, finding that he would certainly be killed, drew his own pistol—for, of course, he had one—and fired in return. The first bullet broke his master's elbow ; the next—for, in accordance with the canon laid down a short time back, he fired until he was sure—killed the man, who fell, shot through the body. The lad, accompanied by an acquaintance, drove in, and, as stated, gave himself up, and was acquitted.

Sometimes, however, when the case is very clear, no sort of inquiry at all follows, especially if horse-

thieves have anything to do with the affair. I have heard very respectable persons argue that it was much the best way to kill offenders off-hand, as it saved so much trouble and expense to the citizens, and was, after all, the only punishment which could be relied on to prevent a repetition of the offence. In point comes an instance which occurred very near this town. A large stock-owner was informed that one of his best horses was missing in the morning, and that the trail led in a certain direction. The stock-owner immediately guessed where the thief was taking the animal, and mounting his horse, he rode right straight on for sixty miles. Here he overtook his horse, which was being ridden leisurely by the Mexican who had stolen him, and who naturally supposed that all danger of pursuit was past. He was speedily undeceived, for the owner, recognising his horse, rode up along-side, shot the rider dead, left him in the highway, to be removed by whosoever chose to do it, and then quietly took both horses home. There was no secret made of this, nor did the slightest judicial inquiry follow. To the western mind, nothing more was needed ; the man had stolen a horse, and ought to be killed ; the owner had caught him and killed him, saving a deal of trouble, and arriving at the result which ought, as Artemus Ward says, 'to be arrove at.'

The Indians here fall into the meshes of the law at times, but not so often as might be expected. If no one gave them whisky, few of these poor creatures would get into trouble. When they do get drink—and their passion for whisky is incredible—they are, without any figure of speech, just like so many wild beasts. Yet they know they have done wrong, and when brought into the presence of the 'alcalde,' are seldom refractory. I have seen a chief—captain of his tribe they call them here, to distinguish them from the real chief, or 'grand capitaine'—so drunk by eleven o'clock in the morning, as to draw his long sheath-knife on one of our officials. The alcalde was in the vicinity, and on being called, procured a rope, and told the drunken Indian he must be 'tied up,' a punishment much disliked by the savages. The redskin, although armed with revolver and knife—tomahawks the Indians of this district do not carry—offered no resistance, but quietly stretched out his long brown arms to be lashed, only piteously uttering 'Poco ! poco !'—meaning that he was to be tied a little tight, not *very* tight. We had no place in which to put him, excepting a sort of rickety enclosure at the back of our offices, where we threw waste boxes from the stores, firewood and the like. A child of ten years could have got out, but the Indian never attempted it. His squaw and children came in, and set up their wailings outside the fence, and he echoed them ; they could have forced the frail door with ease, for there was no guard over him, but the Indians have a superstitious dread of forcing a door, and are hardly ever known to do such a thing. When the captive thought a white man was near, he would declare, in penitential tones, that 'whisky no bueno, whisky no bueno !'—meaning that whisky was no good. In short, he never attempted to break jail, nor did any of his tribe attempt to help him out ; and he remained there, a prey to flies and mosquitoes, until nearly sundown, when, having had six hours' durance, and being thoroughly sobered, our good-tempered alcalde was fetched from his mill, and, looking as

stern as he could, he gave the unhappy Indian a lecture as to what he might expect next time—threatening him, doubtless, with a flogging, which is a discipline awfully unpalatable to the savages—and then released him.

A GOLDEN SORROW.

CHAPTER XXXIX.—L—D—.

THEY had been an hour together, these two, who had never met before, but to each of whom the idea of the other had been familiar for years. It was surely a kind Providence that had sent Lawrence Daly to Miriam at such a moment, and his coming a good omen. He was the one person in the world who knew and loved Walter as she did, with the deeper knowledge, and the fuller love of close companionship and a common life. He had known Florence in her early time of trouble, and he would pity and aid her in this, a far drearier and darker day. A friend to herself in her great loneliness, a counsellor in her great perplexity—all these thoughts had come in an instant to Miriam as she read Lawrence Daly's name, and were strengthened with her first glance at him.

And Lawrence! What were his thoughts as he stood in the presence of that 'Miriam' who had been a 'phantom of delight' to his fancy, for many a day before she 'dawned upon his sight'? How had he pictured her to his imagination, in those days when he and Walter used to talk about her in the lone hut, and in the later time when he learned that his friend's beautiful sister was a widow? He could not have put his own fancy into words, but it certainly had not resembled this reality—a pale woman, with a face in which grief and dread, and a kind of relief and pleasure too, were contending; a woman as oblivious of herself, of any effect she might produce, as if she had been old and ugly, who, while she looked at him and spoke to him, and welcomed him with an out-stretched hand and kind words, was so evidently seeing something else with her mind's eye, that she instantly communicated a sensation of fear to him. Was she even beautiful, this Miriam—of whose face he had drawn many an aerial picture—as she stood there, in her long crape dress, clasped with jet, and her widow's cap, which had fallen off, and was clinging by its crimped edge to her rich bright hair, until she pulled it on, and tied the strings under her chin, in perfect unconsciousness? Perhaps not; he could not tell; but this much was certain, that ever until the end, whenever he chose to do so, Lawrence Daly could bring her before his mind's eye as he saw her in the first minutes of that first interview.

They had been an hour together, and Miriam had told Lawrence how it was with Walter, and he had received the intelligence with such emotion as had in some strange way comforted her with the soothing sense of a shared sorrow. And he had told her the story—of which poor Florence had been able only to give her a garbled version and a bare outline—the story of the nugget and the murder, and of Walter's mysterious oblivion. She listened, with a new sense of awe creeping over her. Once more Walter's nerves had been subjected to a great trial, and again that wondrous, inexplicable gift of memory had failed him, had

been withdrawn from him. As Lawrence described first the doubt, and then the fear, and finally the terrible certainty with which he had noted this mental change in Walter, an eager longing awoke in her to add her testimony also, to tell him that she could understand—she had suffered from them all. The bond of absolute secrecy between her and the mind over which a veil, never to be lifted, was being slowly but surely drawn, began to be intolerable to her. The story itself interested her vividly, and the calm, manly way in which Lawrence spoke, quite unaffectedly, of the loss of the gold, and the necessity for further exile in which it involved him, impressed her deeply. He knew she was expecting Walter's arrival in town—he had heard that from Miss Monitor, whose address he had procured in Paris, and at whose cottage he had called on the previous day—and he had come to Mrs St Quentin's house hoping to find his friend there; but learning that she was as yet alone, he had not been able to resist the temptation to introduce himself. If he had not found her in such trouble—trouble which no one could so truly estimate and share as he, he should have had to ask her forgiveness. She assured him, frankly, that she had never thought of him as a stranger, and that his name was a household word at the Firs.

'Literally, a household word,' she repeated, 'for the baby's name is—Lawrence.' The slightest tinge of colour came to her cheeks as she pronounced the name, which sounded to him like delicious music.

'Poor child,' said Lawrence; 'poor young wife!'

'And she loves him so, oh, how she loves him! I cannot imagine how she will ever bear it.'

'I can,' he said solemnly. 'I have seen Mrs Clint endure sharp trial for his sake, with a self-sacrificing simple courage which I have never forgotten. She will bear this—far, far worse than anything which has gone before—also for his sake, with the same.'

Miriam told him everything. They talked of the past, the present, and the future of Walter and his wife, and Lawrence gave her some hope. It might be a long time before Walter should grow worse, and in his present state there was nothing which would expose him to general remark, nothing which would make Florence very unhappy, when she should once be reconciled to the painful truth that her Walter was unlike other people, and changed from his former self. Miriam listened to him with growing confidence. This friend of her brother's was a strong man, with a kind heart, brave and gentle; she knew so much of him long ago, when Florence used to talk to her about Daly. He was unlike all the other men she was acquainted with, simpler, more kindly, more serious. It was true that she saw him, for the first time, under very peculiar circumstances; but, nevertheless, she felt that no other man she had ever known would have, in the given case, been just the same as he was.

Was he at all like the picture her fancy had painted of him? Florence's description of him had been very vague, as a woman's description of any man, except the one she loves, is apt to be, and Miriam had retained no more of it than the facts, that he was tall, and had a long, fine brown beard. As she grew calmer, and their conversation took a more settled tone, Miriam began to study his

appearance, and to recognise how handsome he was ; of how noble and grand a presence. Where had she seen a face, not exactly like Lawrence's face, but of which his reminded her ? A face with fine, clear-cut features, a broad forehead, and 'level fronting' dark-gray eyes, sweet and piercing, under dark brows, and shaded with thick dark lashes. Very strange and beautiful eyes, with a man's courage looking out of them, and a woman's pity. No wonder Florence had trusted this man, and Walter loved him.

'Did he speak of me often?' Lawrence asked, as Miriam was describing her visit to the Firs.

'Very often ; but I had been warned by Florence to say nothing of—of the story you have told me, because it distressed him, and therefore much of the most interesting part of your life in California was not discussed.'

'I understand. Poor Walter thought I had got a craze, and now I shall never be able to undeceive him.'

'I suppose not,' said Miriam ; and again, as many times before during their interview, unheeded tears ran down her cheeks. 'There will be no possibility of correcting an impression made on his poor mind now.'

'Not only for that reason, which, I trust, is not so decisive as you fear,' said Lawrence, 'but because the clue I hoped to obtain is lost.'

And then he told her the sequel to the story of the nugget ; his meeting with Deering at New York, and the final loss of the pocket-book.

'I had to relinquish the hope of finding the gold then,' he continued, 'and to apply my mind to turning our dust to some purpose. I had Walter's share as well as my own, you know. And I have not done badly on the whole—I shall give the poor fellow an account of my stewardship before I return.'

'Are you going back to America ?'

'Yes ; I have got into a groove there, and I shall keep in it, until something worth having has come of my "pegging away." There is no particular object for me in England now—unless, indeed, I could do something for Walter, but I fear that is taken out of my hands—and I shall return before long. Some day or other, I mean to revisit the old place, when this wonderful railway which is to join the Atlantic and Pacific shores shall be finished ; and perhaps, if I am not too rich to care about it—that nothing can be more unlikely—I may try once more to hit upon the spot where Walter buried that Will-o'-the-Wisp, our nugget. I have made a drawing from memory of our hut and its vicinity, the cliff, the ravine, and the claim generally. I will bring it to you. It will interest you to get an idea of the place where Walter lived so long.'

'It is very hard,' said Miriam, 'that Walter, who owes his life to your care, should have been the means of obliging you to forsake your own country.'

Lawrence looked very sad.

'I don't think Walter has much to thank me for, Mrs St Quentin, if it be with him as we are forced to think it is. It would have been better for him, perhaps, if he had died of the fever in the lone hut.'

'O no,' said Miriam, and her eyes sparkled for the first time, within his sight of them, with their beautiful brightness—'O no ; better far as it is for

her—for Florence. He came back to her ; she has had much happiness—a good store for remembrance, if it is to have no added day ; and if he can only live, live *anyhow*, if he only is, and is *hers*, she will be happy still, I am sure she will. Anything, anything for *her* rather than life without him !'

Since when had Miriam learned the worth and the meaning of love ? What had taught her, all of a sudden, to read the heart of a woman like Florence, hitherto a mystery to her, vaguely beautiful indeed, but which, nevertheless, she was content to leave unsolved ?

Lawrence looked at her, and wondered—wondered at the sudden transition of look, of attitude, of colour which in a moment revealed the beauty, the brilliancy, the life with which his fancy had invested her ; wondered at the intuition which made this woman, who had never loved—so Walter had told him, but after all, how did Walter know ?—who had certainly made a marriage the very opposite of Florence's, free of the whole motive and mystery of Florence's life.

'You are right,' he said, 'and I was wrong. For the moment, I was thinking of Walter himself only. But—to return to what you said—I am not so much of an injured individual after all. I have no ties, and have been more or less of a waif always. The strongest bond between me and my country, or rather between me and England—for I am an Irishman, you know—is Walter.'

Those sweet and piercing dark-gray eyes, with their dark brows and lashes, were, then, the 'Irish eyes' she had heard people talk of. Where had she seen them in a picture ? Was it in an artist's studio in Paris ? So ran her truant fancy while he was speaking. 'He told me you had no relatives.'

'I have none. The last individual with whom, so far as I know, I might have claimed kindred died six months ago, though I did not know the fact for nearly three months afterwards. I was in the Southern States at the time, and did not hear of it until I got back to New York. May I tell you a story about myself, Mrs St Quentin ; or shall I go away now, and come again another day ?'

'No, no,' she said hurriedly. 'Pray, stay with me ; pray, go on ! You will remain and see Walter, will you not ?'

'If you wish it. If it will not harm him.'

'I don't think it can ; he is only too impulsive. Then that is settled ; you will stay.'

Her manner was abrupt and nervous. He imputed it, and so did she, to the agitation of the expected arrival. At all events, whether it should be wise for him to see Walter or not, it was certainly as well that Miriam should not be left alone.

They were sitting, one at either side of the fire-place ; and Miriam now pushed her chair back—the flame was catching her face. A large green carriage-fan lay on the mantel-piece, and Lawrence rose and handed it to her unasked. She thanked him, and sat, holding it in her left hand between her face and the fire, looking up at him.

He began, with a smile, half sad, half comical : 'I told Mrs Clint all about myself once. I wonder whether she repeated any of my not very moving history to you ?'

'She did,' said Miriam. 'Florence told me

about your mother's death, and your expectations from a relative in India, who disappointed them. I think she said you had had no communication with him for a long time, and had given up all hope of his keeping his promises, before you went abroad with Walter.

'That is a perfectly correct outline of the story. But, not very long ago, this interrupted communication was renewed, under rather singular circumstances. The relative in question was not only a relative, but also a connection by marriage. He married my mother's sister, my best friend, and the only human being whom I loved, or who loved me. He deceived and cheated her for a long time with delusive promises of what he would do for me; but she died, nearly seven years ago, and then it was all over. There was nothing more to be looked for in that quarter, except, in the very unlikely event of the old gentleman's dying without a will, my succession to his property as heir-at-law. Upon this possibility, however, I never suffered my mind to dwell for a moment. Though his wife was dead, and he had no child, there was no likelihood, even supposing he did not marry again—as I felt certain he would, and as he actually did—that he should not have many to prefer before me, whom he had never seen, and against whom I believe him to have been deeply prejudiced. In fact, I am quite certain he hated me, very nearly all through his life, and would have gone on hating me until the end of it, but for the interference of some influence or other, which I have vainly tried to trace. Once I did think I had traced it; but a question which I casually asked of a lady—the only lady, except yourself, I have seen since I came to London—was answered in a manner to disperse that notion, to my regret.'

Miriam did not quite understand him. There was something more in his voice and manner than there was in the story he was narrating, as she followed it with a secret nervousness, for which she could not account. There was something which seemed in an inexplicable way personal to herself in what he was saying.

'Pray, bear in mind,' he continued, 'for otherwise you will fail to understand my story, and myself, that I never entertained the remotest expectation of succeeding to my relative's property, and that when, a few months ago, the circumstances occurred which I am about to relate, the notion was, if possible, more utterly removed than ever, by the discovery that he had married in the interval. A few weeks after I met Deering at New York, I began to tire of his society. He was a man I never liked, belonging to the tribe of "smart" men, whom I detest, and troubled with no delicacy of mind whatever. I am too old a traveller to be thin-skinned, and I don't mind inquisitiveness, as a general rule; but my patience gave way under the perpetual cross-questioning of Deering—one of the most secret, stealthy, mysterious fellows in the world about his own affairs, of which, however, I did not want, of course, to know anything—and I said to him I believed he must have some motive in being so excessively curious about me, my ancestors, and my antecedents. I didn't half mean it, and I was sorry, in half a second, for having said it. But it seemed I had hit a blot. The whole mystery of Deering's interest in me was revealed—not that he would not even then, I believe, have gone on concealing

it, only that the moment had arrived in which I must needs appear upon the scene. The interest was of a pecuniary nature. It turned out that Deering's attention had been attracted by an advertisement in the *Times*, repeated in some New York papers, in which information was required concerning a certain individual, whom he had at once identified with me, and that he had been for some time in correspondence with the agent in Paris to whom this information was to be supplied. He did not defend himself in the matter, he did not think he required defence; nor do I think so. He argued, very justly, that whatever I was to hear to my advantage would not be increased if the information came direct from me—which indeed it couldn't have done, for I never saw one of the advertisements, and should, but for Deering, have been in perfect ignorance of them until this day—and that it could not be decreased by his having turned an honest penny by supplying the information. How many honest pennies he actually did turn, I do not know, but a good many, I don't doubt; and he and I parted no worse friends because he had made some money out of me in that way and one or two other ways—and because I positively declined acting on his advice. I always suspect he had pledged himself, and been paid in advance, to produce me bodily, but he succeeded in producing nothing but my handwriting.'

'What was this man's advice to you?' asked Miriam, in a low voice, as she took the fan in her right hand, and interposed it between her face and his.

'His advice was, that I should go to Paris at once, and present myself to the agent. But why should I have done so, Mrs St Quentin? The relative who was now advertising for me, from a motive which I could not understand, had deceived, trifled with, and disappointed me before, and I had gotten over it, lived it down, and prospered moderately, without his aid. How should I know what were his intentions now? I had no further claim upon him; he had married again—a young wife too, but this time a young wife who knew nothing about me, who was nothing to me, whom he could not torment and rule through me, as he had, I firmly believe, tormented and ruled his first wife. I was not going to yield one scrap of my independence, to abandon my least intention for him; he might mean something—in which case his meaning would keep; he might mean nothing—in which case I should not be put to inconvenience. I told Deering my mind plainly; and I then perceived that Deering must have made all he expected to make by the transaction, for he did not urge me. He pressed me on the point of going to England in the spring—I was then just about to go down South, and he got me to write a few lines to the effect that I would do so—and we parted. When I returned, I found the whole thing settled for me. Deering had heard from the agent in Paris; my letter had never reached him—I suppose it had been mislaid by Deering, or somebody to whom he trusted to mail it—however, it did not matter, for the information was no longer of any value to any one. The wealth which only a freak of fortune or a *dernier ressort* of the law could ever have made mine, had gone into much better hands, which, I pray, may long administer it.' He rose and approached her, drew the fan away with courteous gentleness, and held out his hand.

'Mrs St Quentin, I thought you knew—until Miss Monitor told me that you did not—that your husband's name was Clibborn—he changed it to St Quentin because there was a general of that name once of kin to his mother, and it sounded better: I knew nothing about that until Deering found it out from Caux—and that his first wife was my Aunt Kate.'

Miriam sat before him, motionless, white, silent. She made no movement towards taking the hand he held out, though she saw it, and oh! wretched woman, saw the smile, drawing her heart from her bosom into his, which went towards her with the hand.

He coloured, drew back, and said: 'I beg your pardon. I have offended you. I should have told you this in some other way.'

She only said, with a gasp for breath, and an increase of her frightful paleness: 'You are L——D——.'

He did not understand her, and he was alarmed. What had he done? What cruel folly to try her nerves in any way, when they were already so tried by grief and anxiety. 'I entreat you to forgive me,' he stammered. 'I did not think—I fancied it would please you to know there was another tie between Walter's friend and yourself. I——'

'Hush!' she said, in a voice so hoarse and unmusical that its sound still more alarmed him. 'It is no matter; it is no fault of yours. Don't mind me.' She stood up, catching at the mantelpiece with her left hand. 'Please to leave me for the present, Mr Daly,' she said, 'and not to speak to me. I have changed my mind. You must not meet Walter to-day. I will write to you. But go, now, pray, go.'

He lingered for a moment, but her face told him it was best to obey her, and he went, without a word.

CHAPTER XL.—SWIFT RETRIBUTION.

So, it had come! A horrible, swift retribution, which revealed, while it punished her sin! Miriam sat like a stone statue, after Lawrence had left her, thinking, with intensity unmeasured by time, to which a minute's duration was like a year's agony, of that which had befallen her. The event she had relegated to the past, the thing that was gone and done with, the trial she had come through—they were here, in horrible, actual presence of her, under a terrific form which her imagination could not have conceived. How often must she have been near touching this truth, which, had she touched it, must have saved her. What a film of accident had hidden it from her! All was plain to her comprehension, and yet, all was confused to her senses: she had not understood the details clearly, and yet she could not have endured Lawrence Daly's presence one more minute without losing her senses. She needed them more than ever now. What a small thing might have saved her, even the mention of the name of her brother's companion to her husband! At the thought of the old man, the painful frown upon her set face deepened. She hated him; yes, she hated him, in his grave—and of late she had forgotten him. She had been glad sometimes to feel that the remembrance of him did not trouble her—did not recur for many days together, and then but vaguely, and without bitterness. It returned now, when

this dreadful blow fell upon her—this blow, whose weight and terror she did not yet understand to the full—and with it the hate which she had believed was long since conquered. If he had not been so brutal, so sneering about her brother; if he had not shewn such utter indifference to her feelings, such cold contempt for Walter; if he had not made him and his story a prohibited subject, all must have been revealed, and the man to whom he sought to make reparation discovered in Walter's friend, in him who had saved Walter's life. But it was not reparation to Daly, but revenge on her, the old man had sought. When, in the torrent of her thoughts, this one rushed hot and bubbling to the surface, Miriam clasped her hands upon her head and groaned: 'Revenge on me! O my God, has he not had it!'

How nearly she had touched the truth, that night in Paris, when she had discovered that Bianca had stolen the letter which Daly wrote to her for Walter! What was that he had said about the old man's second wife? 'He had married again, this time a young wife, who knew nothing about me, whom he could not torment and rule through me, as he had tormented and ruled his first wife.' And yet, it was through Lawrence Daly he had tormented her, had driven her to the deed she had done. If he had given her back that letter, on that night, and she had given him the explanation she had refused—what then? Ah, who could say! But, at least, not this horrible, hopeless, irremediable calamity.

He was Walter's friend, the man who had rescued him from ruin in London, the man who had saved his life in the Golden State—and Walter had, for her sake, and under her instructions, robbed him of his inheritance. Robbed him! Yes. Miriam used no palliative forms of expression now. What had become of her theory of the forgery? What had become of her argument, that the felony was only a name, and she might offend against the formula of the law, while keeping its spirit uninjured, its intention undefiled? What extraordinary sudden enlightenment was this? Because Lawrence Daly was the injured man, and he her brother's friend, why should her mind undergo such a revolution as that implied in her recognition that her act of 'simple justice, in self-defence,' was an enormous crime? An 'L—— D——' existed somewhere, she had always known, intended by her husband to be his heir, to her detriment and discomfiture. Had she not injured *him*? She had taken no thought of this; she was no more than other women—if the philosophers who so complacently vivisect them be right—capable of abstract ideas. But the truth came to her in concrete shape—whence its form was derived she did not yet ask herself—and she saw it fully, knew it through and through, and pressed its sharp arrows, with all the force of her will, into her conscience and her heart.

Unbounded horror, unspeakable remorse! These were the occupants of her soul, as Miriam sat by the fireside in her new home that day, on every side of her the signs and tokens of the wealth she loved, and had done this thing that she might have it and enjoy it. Remorse, not yet repentance. She had not yet come to see the wrong done to her own soul; her mind was busy, to the point of exquisite torture, with her crime against this man—this man with the god-like smile, and the

voice sounding as no other voice had ever sounded in her ears. What a terrible vindictive fate was hers, and with how sudden a rush it had come upon her! Only little while ago—the sun that had risen upon her sleepless anguish of expectation and fear had not yet gone down into twilight—and she had thought nothing could add to her grief for Walter and for Florence. And now? Now, she was catching, drowning wretch as she was, in this sea of remorse and terror, at the shred of comfort supplied by Walter's loss of memory!

He would not remember when Lawrence Daly should have told him that the old man who had disappointed his hopes, and turned him adrift upon the world, was the same old man to whom his sister Miriam had sold herself for money (in her dismay, Miriam was quite merciless to herself, and would not take the mixed motives which had led to her marriage into account), that he had personated this old man, and forged a will in his name. The calamity which had come upon him would save him from any part of what she was suffering, and always must suffer. What was that sound her lips had formed? ‘Thank God!’ Was she then driven to such desperate straits that the affliction which had been to her as ‘a terror of great darkness,’ only a few hours ago, was turning to her sole source of consolation, her sole chance of endurance and concealment? Yes, it was even so; and while Miriam's heart ached with the thought, her judgment compassed the measure of her dismay and defeat by it.

Florence! Had she forgotten Florence, while she had thought that it was better her brother's intellect should be clouded, and his prime of manhood turned to helplessness and decay, than that he should know what he had done for her, in all its extent and its consequences? Had she forgotten Florence, for whom she had been suffering such agonising compassion? Yes, she had forgotten her for awhile; but when she remembered her, she did not think differently. Something told her that if Walter had proved unable to keep the secret of their crime, as she had no doubt he would have proved when Daly's identity with the L—D— of the memorandum should have been revealed—the knowledge of it would have been far worse to Florence than the future with which she was threatened could ever be. She had interpreted Florence aright to Daly. While her husband *lived* and was *hers*, she would not be entirely unhappy. But, to know him for what he was, however plausibly extenuated, a felon, a forger, would break the heart that loved him, as surely as that heart was holy and pure. Then there tumbled into the torrent of her thoughts this importunate question: Why? She wanted to go on, to think about herself, to form some plan of action, but she could not. Why? What was this which existed in Florence, and set her above the earthliness of love, while it kept fresh within her all its tenderness, and sweetness, and self-devotion? There was no answer yet, but it was to come to Miriam at no distant period.

Who shall tell the warfare of thought which raged within her tortured mind as she sat there, so still to all outward appearance? As well attempt to paint the forms, the motive, the fantastic fury of the storm-clouds when a hurricane is abroad, or the leaping wrath of the waves it lashes. After a time she rose, and, pursued by a terrible

perplexity, began to pace hurriedly up and down the room, like one lost, holding her head in her hands. The whole thing had suddenly become unreal, inexplicable, impossible to her. Had she done this deed? How had it come to pass that she had done it? She, a lady, educated and dwelling in decencies, to whom the mere idea of deliberately breaking the law, rendering herself amenable to the penalties under which ‘common people’ constantly fell, of committing a vulgar crime, was so impossible, that even when she had done it, it had not been, in her eyes, a vulgar crime, and she had never thought about the penalties. Could it be? Was it real? She leaned up against the wall breathless and horrified, as the power of something external to herself came over her with full conviction, and she felt as one might feel who had committed a murder while walking in sleep, and awoke dabbled with the blood of the victim. Thus Miriam gained her first insight into the deadliness of temptation, learned the awful lurking possibilities of human nature, the terrible irrevocableness of an evil deed. ‘Dead is dead.’ And worse; she could not bury this dead thing—it was all around and about her, a maddening, haunting presence. She did not know that its sepulture could be only when remorse should have changed to repentance.

In her hurried, distracted walk, she caught sight of a timepiece. Walter and Florence would arrive in half an hour. How she had dreaded that moment, which now she dreaded only lest she should not be able to control herself sufficiently to ward off suspicion! She went to her room, and her maid dressed her; and she agreed with Mrs Harries that she was looking very pale and tired; and she went down-stairs again, and received her brother and his wife with great self-command. But Florence thought her looking ‘shockingly ill,’ and Mr Martin, who came in the evening, reprimanded her sharply, and told her he had expected better things of her.

There was not much change in Walter. He was very dull, and indifferent, and sleepy. But Miriam observed speedily that Florence was not altogether unconscious. She tried to rouse him, seemed anxious, watched him with sad eyes; and when he heard from Miriam—who had to strive fiercely for composure in telling him—that Lawrence Daly was in London, and would see him the following day, and only said ‘All right,’ appearing to forget it the next moment, she was quite evidently distressed. This was better; their task would be easier. That night, Florence, pleading the fatigue of her journey, avoided seeing Miriam alone; and Miriam wrote to Lawrence Daly a few formal lines, inviting him to visit her brother and his wife on the following day. Then, for the first time in her life, she lay broad awake until the morning. There were to be many sleepless nights for Miriam, and long days of perplexity and suffering, before she learned to mourn, not that her sin had ‘found her out,’ but that she had ‘done this great wickedness against God.’

‘You would not deceive me, I am sure? You would not be persuaded that anything so cruel could be kind or just?’ pleaded Florence to Mr Martin and Lawrence Daly, many days later, when she had been told the truth, and when the fiat had gone forth that her Walter must be, for the

few years he would probably have to live, one between whom and his kind there must be an increasing separation. She had borne it well, submissively, she who was so proud of him! But her mind was haunted by one fear, which she now sought to allay. Would they ever try to take him from her? Would those doctors send him to strangers, to try for cure, who might indeed be very wise, and even gentle, but who would banish her from him? She had avowed this fear to Mr Martin and to Lawrence, to whom she clung with the old trust intensified a thousandfold. But they were now reassuring her.

'Indeed, we would not deceive you, or consent to your being deceived,' said Lawrence, pressing her patient hands in his, and looking through eyes dimmed with tears into her sweet beseeching face. 'You will never be asked to part with Walter; on the contrary, all our hope and trust are in you. He will never need any other care than yours, and it may be that will avail for a long time. Do not fear separation, for it will never befall you.'

'Thank you,' she said, turning her eyes first on him, and then on Mr Martin, with submissive gratitude which wrung their hearts. 'Then I can bear it very well. I could bear it, if God willed it, otherwise; but I am very thankful that I may have my Walter with me; that He has made this light to me—so much lighter, I mean. And—I don't think he will ever be unhappy, for he will always, you know, be the same to his little world—to me and baby.'

Then she left them, and went to him; and while the two men stood, unable to say to one another what was in their minds, Florence was kneeling beside her husband, with her arm encircling his head, as he slept the heavy sleep from which it was so difficult to rouse him, and her sweet lips murmuring, close to his changed face, delighted thanksgiving, as of a mother over her infant, wonderful inarticulate words of love, and prayer that, for the mind darkened upon the earth, the soul might be white before the Throne.

Walter, and Florence, and Miriam were to go abroad soon, to certain baths in a remote part of Germany, which they were advised to try for Walter. He was quiescent and easily managed, but he displayed a growing disinclination for any society but that of Florence and his child. From the first, he took little notice of Daly; and gradually ceased to care for Miriam's presence. Florence remonstrated with her on her resolution to accompany them to Germany. Why should Miriam leave her new house, and change all her plan of life, to go with them? She knew it was to be with her; but how little they could be together! She should be always occupied with Walter; and Miriam must not think that, while this was so, she ever could be unhappy. The innocent sufferer, she on whom the family calamity fell with all its weight, was supporting and comforting the other, out of the treasures of her self-devotion and of God's grace. But Miriam was determined. If she were only to see Florence occasionally in the day, and to say 'good-morning' and 'good-night' to her, she would go. She cared nothing for her house now, and her plans of life were all laid aside.

Since their first interview, Miriam and Daly had never been alone together—this by Miriam's contrivance. So he had never been able to solve the

mystery of her dismissal of him on that occasion, and the painful impression of it remained. He took infinite blame to himself for the manner in which he had told her his story; he had laid stress on the injuries Mr St Quentin had done him, and she, doubtless, thought he included his will in the category, whereas nothing had been farther from his intention. If he could have made her understand that the most he had expected, if he and Mr St Quentin had met, was a kindly recognition, and that he regretted nothing but that he had not had the chance of shaking the old man's hand, and relegating bygones to the region of bygones. Had she suspected him of coming to her in the contemptible character of a complainant, of a disappointed expectant? If so, it must have been the fault of his own manner; and yet, the mere notion was somehow derogatory to her. How could she regard this old man's wealth as of such importance—to him, or to herself—as to give it such a place, in such an interview, under such circumstances? Why did she not regard the coincidence that there was a connecting link between her dead husband and her brother's friend as the trifling matter, which, though interesting, it really was? He could not forget, though he would fain have forgotten, Walter's strictures upon Miriam's marriage, and upon her love of luxury, her over-estimate of wealth. It must be some inexplicable feeling of this kind, some absurd, unworthy notion of a claim, or a censure upon her inheritance, which had caused her offence with him. Lawrence laughed at the idea, but the laugh was not genuine, and the annoyance was, and also keen.

He would explain himself fully, and rectify this, at the first opportunity; there must be nothing in his mind to dim the image he had set up there of Miriam. But she never gave him a chance. She met him with graceful coldness; her manner was perfect, and utterly wanting in all he desired to find in it, so that he asked himself if the frank confidence, the intimacy, the emotion which had characterised their first meeting, had existed in reality or in his presumptuous fancy? She treated him with the utmost courtesy, as *Walter's friend*, and never for one moment lowered the barrier between him and herself, which rendered any recurrence to the circumstances of their first interview impossible. He was puzzled, disappointed, disheartened, and only the sad need in which Florence stood of his sympathy and help, and her perfect trust in him, hindered his taking an abrupt leave of them all, and returning at once to America.

Only slight reference was made to the relationship which had existed between Lawrence and Mr St Quentin. Walter had heard of it without interest, and soon apparently forgot it, and Florence had said little about it. If he were not forced to believe that Miriam resented it, since she kept him at a distance so inexorably, he might have thought she also had forgotten it. He saw her almost every day, and every day he felt that it would be better for him to see her no more. Fate had not been propitious to Lawrence Daly. Of all the women in the world, his world at least, Miriam was the only one whom it was absolutely forbidden to him to love. He had never loved, never imagined that he loved any woman, until now. And now, that one unattainable woman

had taken such full, utter, immediate possession of his heart, and his soul and his senses, that all life to come must be one dead level of aimless endeavour, unprofitable labour, mere waste, because she would never love him, never belong to him! He was a strong man, reticent and brave, a man who knew how to take the training and punishment of life as they ought to be taken by those who are going up higher to the guest-tables of the Master; but he winced, and writhed, and shuddered under this infliction of his fate. The warp in her character, which he knew—for he was no blind lover, of the kind who, when their eyes are opened, are most unreasonable tyrants to women, but clear-sighted, one who loved her, not a glorified fancy of her—made the unhappy circumstances more fatal than they would have been, had he entertained even the faintest hope that he might win her. How would she, warped as her mind was, by her false estimate of wealth, regard a profession of love on his part—he, who would have been her husband's heir, but for the will which gave all to her? Perhaps her cold, resolute avoidance was intended as an intimation to him that such an expedient for the remedy of his disappointment, in which it was plain she persisted in believing, was not within his reach. When this suggested itself to him, Lawrence Daly's power of endurance ceased, and he resolved that, not even for the sake of Florence, would he remain longer in London. On the following day, he told Mrs St Quentin and Florence that he was going to Liverpool on Friday—it was then Monday—and should sail for New York on Saturday. Florence dropped her needle-work, and began to cry; but Miriam, sitting idle, was quite unmoved.

'It must have come some time,' he said, taking Florence's hand; 'and you are going away so soon, it is but a very few days earlier than you would have left me. You will send me good news from Germany; and next year, if things go well with me, I will come and see you.' Not a word, not a look in all this was addressed to Miriam, who might not have heard it, so perfect was her composure.

'Yes, I know, Lawrence—and you are very kind—but, all seems to come at once—and'— Then Florence, for once unable to control herself, hurried out of the room. Lawrence fully expected that Miriam would follow her. But Miriam sat, her heavy and hollow eyes downcast, in perfect silence.

For only the second time in their lives these two were alone together. After several minutes of great embarrassment to Lawrence, Miriam said: 'I think, Mr Daly, you told me you had a drawing of the place you and Walter lived at, and of your claim, at the gold mines—will you give me that drawing?'

'Of course,' said Lawrence, much surprised. 'If you wish, I will give it to you with pleasure. But it is a mere sketch—and'

'Yes, you told me so. But I wish for it, and some day I mean to let Walter see it, and try whether any association with it exists in his mind. Don't be afraid of my doing anything rash; I will watch for a good opportunity. Will you bring me the sketch to-morrow?'

As she spoke, she drew towards her the cabinet of ivory, silver, and ebony which formerly stood in her boudoir in Paris, and unlocked it.

'I will give you an equivalent for your sketch,

Mr Daly,' she continued, in a tone of even more than her customary coldness, as she drew out one of the drawers of the cabinet, and laid her hand on a miniature. 'Look at that likeness. Of whom is it?'

He advanced, and took the portrait in his hands. 'It is my Aunt Kate.'

'Mr St Quentin's first wife. It is yours. Don't thank me; this, at least, is your right. Or, if you will thank me, let it be in action.'

She locked the cabinet, pushed it from her, and rose. 'Mr Daly,' she said, 'I am the last person in the world who ought to ask a favour of you.'

'But the first,' he replied earnestly, 'to whom I would render one.'

She bit her lip, and frowned, and he took heed that she did so.

'I have a most particular, a most urgent reason for requesting you to defer your departure. I cannot explain it, I cannot even indicate it. We go to Germany this day fortnight. Will you, as the only service I shall ever ask of you, remain in England for the same space of time after we have gone?'

Her tone was impassive, but the look in her eyes made Lawrence her slave.

'I will,' was all he said.

'And will you tell *no one* that you do so at my request?'

'I will tell no one.'

Then she left him; and from that moment, until they exchanged a general farewell, she was never again alone with him. And poor Florence thought he had deferred his departure for her sake.

ISLES OF EDEN.

It is not often that our aristocracy condescend to disport themselves in light literature; if they write at all, it is on politics or history; but there is something in keeping a private Doctor, that appears to give them a lively style. Lord Milton narrated the travelled experience of himself and his medical attendant; and now 'the Earl and the Doctor' give us their combined views upon Polynesian life. About themselves they are very reticent, which, so far as any reputation that may be derived from the volume is concerned, is hard upon the secondary personage; for everybody knows that P. stands for Pembroke, while his companion remains anonymous. Where they and their yacht first sprang from is uncertain: the feverish fear of making himself a bore, that is a characteristic and most creditable feature in P.'s character, probably caused him to eliminate all introductory matter from the story of his cruise—but, at all events, here they are at Tahiti, in the first page, as though, like Venus, they had risen from the foam of the sea.

'I can never forget the scene that burst upon my astonished and half-opened eyes as I turned out of bed one morning and found myself entering the port of Papiete. Great mountains, of every shade of blue, pink, gray, and purple, torn and broken into every conceivable fantastic shape, with deep, dark, mysterious gorges, shewing almost black by contrast with the surrounding brightness; precipitous peaks and pinnacles rising one above the other like giant sentinels, until they were lost in the heavy masses of cloud they had impaled; while below, stretching from the base of the mountains to the shore, a forest of tropical trees with

the huts and houses of the town peeping out between them.

'The finest islands of the West Indies idealised, with a dash of Ceylon, is all I can compare it to. And the natives! How well they match the scene! The women, with their voluptuous figures—their unique, free, graceful walk—their nightgowns (for their dress is nothing but a long chemise, white, pale green, red, or red and white, according to the taste of the wearer, which is invariably good) floating loosely about in a cool refreshing manner—their luxuriant black tresses, crowned with a gracefully plaited Araroot chaplet, and further ornamented by a great flowing bunch of white Reva-reva—their delicious perfume of cocoa-nut oil (it is worth going to Tahiti for the smell alone), and, above all, their smiling handsome faces, and singing, bubbling voices, full of soft cadences—all this set off by the broken scattered rays of green light shining through the shady avenues. Oh, that I were the artist who could paint it! What pleasant places these avenues are for a stroll in the evening, when the heat of the sun is dying away! To meet the great, strapping, pleasant-looking men, in their clean white shirts and party-coloured waist-cloths, each greeting you, especially if you are English, with a ready smile and a hearty "Ya Rana," which means all kinds of salutations and blessings; sometimes even, if they like the look of you, stopping to shake hands. I have seen even small pickaninnies stop in their infantine gambols, and toddling up with their little faces puckered into dimples, and their little puds held up to reach your fingers, pipe out a shrill "How do you do?" And as for the young ladies! The most bashful and coy will never pass you without a greeting, a glance of the eyes, and a slight gathering in of her dress with her elbows, to exhibit her buxom figure to full perfection. Or else perhaps she will come up coquettishly, and ask you for the loan of your cigar, take a few puffs at it, and hand it back again gracefully to the rather astonished owner; and then, with a parting compliment, which you most likely don't understand, let you go your way in peace—or not! I suppose it is a fault on the right side, but they are a trifle too amiable sometimes.'

There must be certainly one or two drawbacks (beside the mosquitoes) to such a paradise as the Society Islands are here described to be; or why does anybody who *is* anybody, and *'in society'*, live anywhere else? If we ourselves were not liable to sea-sickness, and also very much alarmed when the 'sea disturbance' is over '2' or '3', we should set sail for these Islands of the Blest tomorrow, if we placed any confidence in the Earl and the Doctor's combined testimony—which we do not. With all the wish in the world to be truthful, no traveller can describe a place he has delighted in quite honestly; he speaks of it as of the woman he loves—to its faults a little blind, to its failings more than kind; or perhaps regarding it through the mellowed haze of distance, he is really oblivious of them. Yet, allowing ever so much salt for enthusiasm, these (so-called) savage islets must be very glorious spots; and as for their distance from civilisation, alas, we fear it was their excessive latitude which was one of their points of recommendation to our lively friends.

Imagine, when tired with the glories of the land, the going out in a canoe on some great reef, and gazing down on the mysterious caves

and fissures of coral, 'some of it like crimson fans woven from the most delicate twigs—some of a beautiful mauve or purple—some like miniature models of old gnarled trees—some like great round mounds of snow-white ivory, chased and carved with a superhuman delicacy—some like leaves and budding flowers; while all about are scattered great red and yellow starfish. . . . Fish of every shape and colour swimming lazily in and out of the black-looking caves, or coasting round the overhanging edges of the coral precipices; some of the finest cobalt blue, some golden, some pink, some more like beautiful bronze and purple butterflies than natives of the sea, with long white rats' tails, swimming or floating frontways, sternways, sideways, with apparently equal ease. Some variegated like harlequins; many, not with their hues more or less blending with each other, as in Christian fishes, but mathematically divided by regular distinct lines, as if they had paid for their colours, and had them laid on by the square inch.' Imagine, when tired of gazing into this Wonder-water, threading your way between the patches of coral, but inside the outer reef, and sailing along the coast for miles in smooth water, with one picturesque bay after another to be explored—sure, too, though you be but a common sailor, with empty pockets, to be received with welcome everywhere. 'One man comes out to steer you by signs towards the best landing-place; another, when your boat strikes, trots out to her, and without more ado, directs you to jump on his back, and carries you ashore as though you were but a fly on his gigantic shoulders.' You are received by this family with affectionate attention, and when, after a friendly palaver, you return to your canoe, you find it filled with cocoa-nuts, bananas, and bread-fruits—presents for which the donor is offended if you offer any return. The whole book is composed of such pictures of scenery and manners, and reads like a fairy tale. At Tahiti alone, where French influence reigns, or did reign, there is some earthy element in the descriptions; but even that is worth quoting. Our authors are nothing if they are not citizens of the world, and we are much mistaken if they are not better pleased to air their opinions on mankind, and their speculations into futurity, than to paint the gorgeous scenes they have reproduced for us so graphically.

In Otaheite, as everywhere that is out of the way, the 'cosmopolitan Micawbers' are to be met with, 'men who try their hands at every kind of wild speculation in strange places, and whom you may meet one day living in affluence, and next month earning their bread by the work of their hands, waiting for another chance to turn up. I delight in these fellows. . . . "They are vagabond adventurers," respectable society may cry. Well, so were Sir Walter Raleigh and Francis Drake: and it is this class of men that macadamises the world.' Here is a picture that shews a literary artist of a high class; and who, be he 'P.' or 'the Doctor,' will do something more and better, when he has got rid of his passion for digression and diatribe, than even these sprightly *South Sea Bubbles*.* 'There is a man appearing before my mind now, known but for a short time, yet not

* *South Sea Bubbles*. By the Earl and the Doctor Bentley.

easily forgotten. Well do I remember his massive, well-shaped head; his *worn*, yet handsome and merry face, so full of humour, kindness, and fun, that it used to warm the cockles of my heart. A man with the mark of the "vagabond dry-rot" plainly written upon him, yet one that few could help loving and even trusting. Often he used to tell me, in his quaint philosophical way, the stories of his many wild speculations in different parts of the world, and how they ended in his becoming "flat broke," as he used to merrily term it! And the next-door neighbour to this paragon, or even his chum, living in the same hut and on terms of equality, might be an old whaler, or runaway man-of-war's man of the worst type, utterly devoid of all feelings but the basest, and who has broken every one of the commandments at the very least. However, life is not wholly to be comprehended from the bay window of a St James's club-house, it seems. 'At Atimaono,' which is not an assize-town, we suppose, 'the book-keeper' [at a cotton-plantation] 'was an infantry major, the store-keeper a captain in a light-cavalry regiment, and the barman the son of rich parents, and grandson of the mayor of a great town in the British Isles. There are ups in this world and there are downs, as Mr Plornish wisely remarks. Such is life south of the equator.' In the late Alexander Smith's *Summer in Skye*, we remember the same observation with respect to the ne'er-do-wells of good family being found in very out-of-the-way spots; but the poet did not take quite so liberal a view of them as do the Earl and the Doctor. These latter, indeed, are charitable to everybody, except clergymen, missionaries, and respectable persons in general. As decency is said to be a matter of climate, so do they boldly affirm that morality is so likewise, an opinion which, in conjunction with some others of a still more unorthodox tendency, compels us to wish that they would avoid what they doubtless believe to be 'philosophic reflection,' and stick to their very agreeable narrative. The experiences with which their friends with the vagabond dry-rot favoured them are most sensational. One of them, being taken prisoner 'among the Caribees,' used to have his thighs felt every morning by his captors, just as a butcher feels his steak, to see how they 'were getting on,' with a view to their being served at table. Another, related how a whole ship's crew had been devoured in the Pomoton group (no connection with our Society Islanders); and how, when a man-of-war was sent to avenge the matter, the natives all took to the water—*dived* into the coral caves, where they could be heard but not got at. A third 'informed us that in the Fiji a slave had been fattened, on purpose to be killed and eaten on the visit of Prince Alfred; but whether they allowed him to try Banting when His Royal Highness did not make his appearance, or served him up to a select party to reap the reward of their care and trouble,' he omitted to add. Not only is this book teeming with high spirits, wherein we may reasonably trace the authorship to the young earl, but occasionally we come across a very sagacious remark indeed, that seems to smack of riper years. 'There are three great classes of Fools in this world: First, the wise fool, who knows he is an ass, but deems the fact a secret to be kept between himself and his Maker; secondly, the happy fool, who considers himself rather a genius than other-

wise; thirdly, the fool of fools, who consciously and defiantly proclaims his foolishness to the world in general.'

As honey is extracted from the bee, so even from the mosquito do our authors express wisdom. 'There is no sound in nature expressive of such venomous acrid spite as the "ping" of a mosquito; and though they rarely bite me, the mere wickedness of the expression has kept me awake many a hot and weary hour. The only sound at all to be compared with it is a peculiar way women have of saying "My dear" to one another.' And again, how true is this observation respecting early risers and great walkers! 'It is curious that the two things that make men most unbearably conceited are getting to the top of something, or seeing a sunrise.'

These hits are excellent; but it is evident that they are shot by one who delights in shooting, without being very particular about the mark. Otherwise, our author's account of missionary enterprise in the South Seas would give us serious disturbance. We cannot think that the money expended to that end is dissipated to such very little purpose. It may be very offensive to come upon a suffocating structure like a third-rate meeting-house in an English country town, among the beautiful scenery of the tropics, as also upon a personage in black broadcloth with a tall white tie, whose tone is nasal, and manners very stiff by contrast with those of his native flock; but it is our belief that both 'the church' and 'the missionary' do more good than harm in Polynesia. That they have introduced hypocrisy is possible; but hypocrisy has been well defined as the tribute that vice pays to virtue, and before their coming, vice and virtue were synonymous; and—although our author seems to think, even in this case, that 'where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise'—we are of opinion that some difference should be made between them. Moreover, though we advance the idea with all deference, was it not the missionaries who abolished the unpleasant custom of eating human flesh among our charming South Sea friends?

To the Earl and the Doctor, perhaps even human flesh would not have come amiss if served up by the lovely denizens of Samoa; and as it was, they did eat with relish Kava, a condiment that is previously masti—well, 'ruminated' (if they will have it so) by these same native princesses—'steadily, quietly, and nicely, as by the daintiest Alderney in Her Grace's fancy dairy... The young ladies did not ruminate alone: near them sat stalwart young fellow, who, turning half away from them and us, quietly took up a piece, and ruminated too. This is the thing to do—the delicate thing—the real quiet unobtrusive way of shewing your nascent affection. You help her to ruminate Kava.' After about ten minutes of this touching process, three balls of vegetable matter, each the size of a longish walnut, were placed in the bowl, and then pure water and hibiscus being added, the dainty dish was ready for table. 'It struck me as tasting like thin gruel, into which the slightest suspicion of white pepper and rhubarb had been cast,' but as for the renowned effects, our author rather mysteriously adds: 'I might as well have drunk half a bottle of flat ginger-beer.'

It is doubtful, indeed, whether to its wit, or to its surpassing descriptions of scenery, *South Sea*

Bubbles will owe its popularity; but popularity it is sure to have. Before one has got half through its three hundred pages, one gets to like our good-humoured lively authors almost as much as they liked the islanders. And when we read at last how the gallant yacht that introduced them to so many charming spots is wrecked, and all its tropic treasures—for it was full of interesting and valuable gifts from many an isle—sunk beneath the waves, we are almost inclined to shed tears of vexation. It is the brightest book of travel we have read for many a day.

BESIEGED BY CATAMARANS.

I REMEMBER to have heard a veteran traveller, just returned from long wanderings in the wilder regions of North America, sum up the results of the expedition as follows: ‘When I left England, I was full of enthusiasm about “the noble red man,” whom I privately considered to be the finest fellow breathing. Reckoning my esteem of him at one hundred when I first started, I calculate that, on reaching New York, it had fallen to ninety-eight. By the time I got to St Louis (thanks to what I learned on the road), the thermometer stood at seventy. At Denver City, where I first saw the red man *in propria persona*, it was as low as thirty-five; and when we got fairly past the Indian country—which we crossed, with the scalping-knife hanging over our heads—I said to my fellow-enthusiast: “Well, old boy, what do you think of the red man now?” “What do you?” “Well, I’ll tell you; if there’s a party going out to fight the Indians, we’ll go too!” “By Jove,” said he, “so we will!”’

I am not mathematical enough to classify my emotions so accurately as this; but I must plead guilty to an exactly similar change of opinion, although it occurred not in the Far West, but in the Far East. To an indefatigable traveller, sighing over the pages of Mr Murray for more worlds to conquer, there can be no greater windfall than the suggestion of a perfectly novel route; and the offer of a passage in the good ship *Antelope*, bound on a prolonged cruise through the East Indian Archipelago, came to me like ‘water to the thirsting camel,’ or the loan of a five-pound note to a gentleman in difficulties. As the penny novelists would put it, ‘to accept the offer, to pack two trunks and a carpet-bag, to call a cab and drive to the St Katharine Dock, was the work of a moment!’ and the second morning after found us well down the river, bound for a (to me at least) perfectly unknown region. This, indeed, constituted the great charm of the expedition. In these days of perpetual motion, when one’s only chance of finding an unexplored region is to stay at home, and when one’s *vis-à-vis* at a dinner-party, or in a railway-carriage, cannot open his mouth without letting drop something about the hotel charges at Timbuctoo, the probable site of Kirjath-jearium, or the pleasure of a week’s fly-fishing on the Amazon; in such an age it is no slight treat to discover a route *not* traversed every year by a million or so of one’s fellow-creatures. We do travelling nowadays (like everything else) at racing speed; and we have already had ‘A Fortnight in Russia,’ ‘A Week in Palestine,’ ‘A Day in Algeria;’ to be followed, no doubt, by ‘Half-an-hour on Cape Horn,’ by the author of ‘Twenty-five Minutes at the North Pole.’

But somehow one does not see many books on Borneo, Java, New Guinea, or Celebes; and for that very reason, if for no other, I rejoiced unfeignedly in the prospect of going thither.

But another and a stronger incentive was the prospect of forming a personal acquaintance with the islanders of the eastern ocean, concerning whom I had heard so many contradictory reports. My own preconceived idea, drawn from countless miscellaneous sources, from the immortal biographer of ‘the Man Friday,’ down to the entertaining author (whose name I have ungratefully forgotten) of ‘A Fortnight in the Sandwich Islands,’ represented them as a simple and inoffensive race, living in primitive happiness amid an eternal summer, feeding on baked pig and cocoa-nut, and amusing themselves with paddling light periaguas (whatever they might be), swimming for hours together without fatigue, and chanting in a mellow recitative the national songs of their ancestors. The darker shades of the picture—the ferocity, cannibalism, and hideous superstition attributed to them by various authorities—I persisted in regarding as the calumnies of European prejudice; and, strong in my optimist creed, was ready to welcome the ‘noble savage’ as a man and a brother.

This *couleur-de-rose* theory, however, found two redoubtable adversaries, even amid the limited circle of my fellow-travellers. The one was our skipper, Captain Darling, as fine a fellow as ever walked a quarter-deck; equally at home when shouting his orders amid the pelting spray, in tattered flannel shirt and trousers, or when sitting down, in spotless linen and trim blue coat, to discuss Marryat’s novels or Longfellow’s poetry with me over our after-dinner dates and bananas. He would listen to all my outpourings on the ‘Aboriginal Question’ with a smile of quiet indulgence more disconcerting than any argument, merely saying: ‘You’ll change your mind by-and-by, Mr K—.’ The other and more formidable contravener of my opinions was old Sandy M’Phereson, the first-mate, a stalwart old fellow from the banks of the Clyde, with a square granite-hewn face, round which his short gray hair curled up defiantly, as if asserting itself against every wind that blew. He had been thirty-seven years on blue water, and was a perfect mine of racy anecdote and picturesque description; and it was no small treat to me to recline on a spare-sail under the glorious moonlight of the tropics, and listen to old Sandy’s graphic sketches of the thousand strange places which he had seen. But on the Aboriginal Question I obtained from him no sympathy whatever; and the quaint, dry humour with which he dissected my Utopian creed was infinitely exasperating.

‘It’s no for me,’ he would say, ‘to jodge thae islanders, wha may be varra gude fallows in their ain way; but I canna just say they’re the maist respectable company a mon cud meet wi’. Yon fawshion o’ devoroin’ a’ their substance at aye gran’ feast, and then stairvin’ for days thegither, is clean contrary to the laws o’ poleetical economy; and thaft ither custom o’ disposin’ o’ their pree-soneers by convairtin’ them into mutton-choops, although doobtless an auld and weel established usage, is no precesely in accordance wi’ the rules o’ scienteefic warfare, nor yet o’ scienteefic cookery. I’ll allo they hae gotten twa-three ceevileesed hawbita, sic as thievin’, leein’, and gettin’ fou’

[drunk]; 'but I canna say that their nautical progress is much advanced thereby.'

'Mr M'Pherson,' interrupted I indignantly, 'you are evidently prejudiced against these poor creatures, and I'm surprised that a man of your age and experience should be so.'

'Aweel, it may be e'en sae,' answered the old man slyly; 'but I'm thinkin', sir, gin ye were ance to risk yer purse or yer life amang tha Babes o' Grace, ye wad maybe begin to be a wee bit *prejudiced* yersel'.'

And so week rolled after week, and at length we came fairly into the midst of the Eastern Archipelago. What I saw there I will not attempt to describe. Far abler writers have made the same attempt, and failed signally. We of the temperate zone have no standard of comparison by which to measure the workings of nature in the tropics, where the fiery fulness of life that abounds on every side makes all things alike gigantic and overwhelming. Long reefs of coral, displaying their fairy tracery through the clear smooth water for miles together; floating masses of dark, glossy sea-weed, hundreds of acres in extent; birds and fishes of new and marvellous aspect; butterflies as large as sparrows, gorgeous with every variety of colour; mighty forests, rank with all the luxuriance of tropical vegetation, and filled with a chorus of all imaginable notes of beast or bird, sinking at times into a weird, ghastly silence, broken only by mysterious voices, like those of unseen spirits: all this, seen under the glorious sunshine of the equatorial seas, made up a picture to which no tongue or pen can do justice.

But even in this limitless enjoyment there was one drop of gall. We touched, in passing, at several of the smaller islands; and it was now that, for the first time, my cherished theory began to give way before the shock of actual observation. The moment we cast anchor, the water around us literally swarmed with natives, some in canoes, some on rafts, and many actually swimming, while the air rang with barbarous Sooloo and still more barbarous broken English, as cocoa-nuts, bananas, pieces of carved wood, mats, conch-shells, and other native products, were eagerly offered for sale. My first *bondā-side* view of the islanders did more to disillusionise me than all the rhetoric of old M'Pherson, the lurking smile on whose grim visage shewed how fully he appreciated the situation. Their long, gaunt, lithe, snaky frames, reeking with filth and rancid oil; their harsh, grating voices, and uncouth gestures; their flat, ape-like skulls, and coarse, chinless faces; their small, deep-set, rat-like eyes, out of which theft and murder looked greedily ever and anon—all inspired me with an indescribable aversion, which my second glimpse, a few days later, increased rather than diminished; and when, on the seventh day after my first introduction to my ideal, I saw a 'noble savage' getting soundly thrashed by one of our tars for attempting to purloin his tobacco-pouch, I was startled to find myself sympathising with the chastiser instead of the chastised, and feeling a strong inclination to go and do likewise. Nevertheless, I strove hard to believe that these monsters could not be of the same race with the magnificent children of nature whom I had imagined. 'It is easier,' says the old proverb, 'to convince a man against his senses than against his will,' and my conversion (as will be seen) required a stronger agent to effect it.

A few days later, we were caught by a storm, which drove us far out of our course, and for eight-and-forty hours made our position sufficiently precarious. Well do I remember how, in the very thick of it, when sea and air alike seemed one boiling whirl of foam, and every one was clinging to whatever he could seize, old M'Pherson came close to me, and said coolly: 'Dinna be feared, sir; we'll do yet, gin the wind fa'.'

'And if the wind keeps up, what then?' asked I tentatively.

Sandy eyed me for a moment in silence, with that air of pitying contempt wherewith one might look at a child asking why it might not set fire to a powder-magazine, and then answered in slow monosyllabic tones: 'Gin—the—wind—keep—up, we'll—a—be—wi—the—deil—in—five—minutes!'

'Job's comfort!' thought I, as I turned away; but happily the event proved otherwise. The wind did go down, all of a sudden; and on the third morning, we found ourselves in a very ragged condition, becalmed off a projecting headland, which the captain pronounced to be the western extremity of New Guinea.

'Dampier's Straits!' said he, looking up from his chart: 'the very last place I should have chosen to be becalmed in, considering the sort of gentry that we're among. These confounded tropics do everything in extremes; one either gets too much wind, or none at all!'

Fortunately, we had carried away none of our masts; but our spars and rigging had suffered grievously, and the first thing to be done was to set all hands to repair damages. The work was going briskly on, when the look-out at the mast-head reported 'Boats coming off shore!' On a nearer view, however, they turned out to be not boats, but 'catamarans'—upon which, made as they are merely of a few light planks lashed together, these amphibious monsters will sometimes face a surf that would try the quality of a life-boat. Captain Darling levelled his telescope at the advancing flotilla; and I, watching him without knowing why I did so, saw his lips set all at once, and his whole face harden like congealed metal.

'Mr M'Pherson,' said he quietly, 'call all the hands down from aloft, and get up the cutlasses and boarding-pikes. Sharp now!'

'Are they going to attack us, then?' asked I, somewhat startled at this new feature in the moral aspect of my 'black brethren.'

'They don't come by a hundred at a time only to trade,' answered the skipper decisively; 'and besides, they've got no women with them to-day, and every man-jack of 'em has a bit of matting round his neck. There's a crease or a hatchet under every one of those mats, take my word for it. They see that we're becalmed, and they're coming out to make a show of trading, and then tackle us unawares; and we haven't a single musket on board, worse luck!'

As he spoke, the foremost catamarans drew up alongside, and some of those upon them shouted to us to heave them a rope, while others held up bananas and cocoa-nuts, as if wishing to trade. Others, again, offered cane-spears, or carved bows and arrows; but the number of these weapons (with which the flotilla literally bristled) made me suspect that they were meant for other purposes than traffic. Meanwhile, a fresh line of catamarans

had come up to leeward, forming a complete cordon around the vessel; and we were fairly besieged.

It is always difficult to tell how one may be affected by the sudden appearance of a deadly peril. I have seen a man whose life hung by a thread, watching, with the greatest apparent interest, the movements of a spider on his window. I myself, about three years before the time of which I am writing, found leisure, in the crisis of the worst danger I have ever encountered, to note the peculiar shape of a cloud in the sky. It seems to me that whatever fear one feels on such occasions comes *after* the peril; in the actual crisis there is no time for it. My first feeling at sight of the savage host gathering round us was one of *rage*—a kind of angry disgust at the idea of these miserable creatures daring to molest us at all. At that moment old Sandy McPherson came aft with a cutlass in his hand, and his face set like a flint, muttering as he passed me: ‘The Lord forgive us if we kill thae purtaynens, wha ken nae better!’ Involuntarily I called to mind big Tregarva’s truculent prayer just before encountering the poachers,* and began to realise that this quiet, pleasant, Bible-reading old man might prove a very ugly customer on occasion.

Meanwhile, our men, in obedience to the skipper’s orders, were making a pretence of trading with the savages, in order to prevent the latter from suspecting our knowledge of their intentions, and to delay the attack as long as possible. Strange, indeed, it seemed to be joking and huckstering with these bloodthirsty fiends, whose arrows might at any moment strike us down; but such a farce could not last long. The savages, irritated by our refusal to allow them on board, and beginning to suspect that we saw through their design, grew angry and menacing. Hands were clenched, weapons brandished, threatening cries uttered; and at length one of them gave a short, sharp screech, like the scream of a raven, at which, as at a concerted signal, a volley of arrows came rushing into our midst.

‘Down, every man, fore and aft!’ roared the skipper; and in an instant the crew lay crouched on the deck. The captain and mate were close to me, and I heard the former mutter: ‘If the calm lasts till nightfall, they’ll climb on board in the dark, over each other’s shoulders. God help us!’ This was the only complaint uttered by our stout commander, the first and last weakness of a brave man, face to face with apparently certain destruction.

As I write, the long, weary hours of that terrible afternoon come back to me like a hideous dream, the main features of which are fearfully vivid, though the whole is unreal and impossible. I can remember the set, grim faces of our crew, as they lay doggedly awaiting their doom. I can remember hearing the shouts of the savages, and watching the arrows as they quivered in the rigging, or fell rattling on the deck. More clearly than all, I can remember the strange longing which kept urging me to start up and look over the side at our unseen enemies, as if to see my death before it came. The western sky reddened—the light began to fade—and still we were there. Hoarse yells of triumph came echoing from below; our

enemies knew as well as we what the sunset must bring with it. The captain and mate gripped one another’s hands, without a word, and then sat motionless as before.

It must have been some little time after this (how long, I cannot say—it seemed an age) that the captain, rising cautiously, for the twentieth time, to glance over the sea, gave a sudden start, bent eagerly forward, and then drew a long, deep breath, like a thirsty man after his first draught of water; and then came, as if heaved up from the very depths of his chest, the two words: ‘Thank God!’

‘What is it?’ whispered I, creeping up beside him.

He answered by pointing far away to the southward, where, through my glass, I could just descry a barely perceptible ruffle on the surface of the water—what sailors call ‘a cat’s-paw.’ Moment by moment it grew more distinct, and steadily approached us. Presently, one of the huge sails that hung drooping overhead gave a long lazy heave—flapped back against the mast—heaved again—and then began slowly to fill out. Cries of rage burst from the savages below; fresh flights of arrows were shot on board—but it was too late—sail after sail filled out, and the spell-bound ship lived once more. Slowly, calmly, grandly, the great hull moved on, the rafts scattering before it like shadows; there was one last howl of impotent fury—one more discharge of arrows—and our vessel left her assailants behind, and glided away toward the open sea. We were saved.

And when the black ring of the besiegers was but a speck on the darkening horizon, old McPherson stalked up to me, and asked, with the very ghost of a smile glimmering on his iron features: ‘Weel, sir, ha ye no begun to be a wee bit prejudiced against yer black brithers?’

I had indeed—once and for ever.

I N V A L I D E D.

An! to be able to rise,
And leave the wearisome room,
And be out once more under sunny skies,
Away from this dull, close gloom!

I dream of lying at ease
Among the fern and the grass,
And looking up through the long-branched trees,
Watching the small clouds pass.

I pull the blossoms that grow
In the soft moss under my hand,
And welcome the health-giving winds that blow,
Cooling the summer land.

And ah! it is all so bright,
And the happiness is so great!—
But the dream in a moment has taken flight,
And I turn with a sigh, to wait.

On Saturday, 1st June, will be commenced a NOVEL, entitled

A WOMAN’S VENGEANCE.

By the Author of *Cecil’s Tryst*, &c.

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* In Mr Kingsley’s *Yeast*.